

Section 2 - Planning and Cultural Resources

- **Definition of cultural resources**

Cultural resources are the collective evidence of the past activities and accomplishments of people. They include buildings, objects, features, locations, and structures with scientific, historic, and cultural value.

Archaeological sites are one type of cultural resource, unique in that they are the only way to learn about people who kept no written records. They also can be used to confirm, correct, and expand upon the written records left by our ancestors.

The **Context** in which objects are found is just as important, if not more so, than the objects themselves. It is the context that tells the story of how an object came to be where we find it, what it means, and who put it there.

- **Examples of cultural resources**

Prehistoric vs. historic: Prehistoric resources date to the time before written records for a specific area, while historic resources are those dating to the time of written records. In North America, the time of written records begins about 1500 A.D. with the arrival of European explorers. However, some parts of the country were not visited by these explorers until much later. Some artifacts which are considered prehistoric were still in use during the early historic period in North America. Stone projectile points, for example, were still being used by Native Americans after the arrival of Europeans and stone hearths were used in prehistoric times but are still in use today.

Extant vs. archaeological: Extant resources

are those which are still standing in much the same form as when they were first constructed.

Historic houses, bridges, and farmsteads are examples. Archaeological resources are comprised of the subsurface remains of buildings, fireplaces, storage pits, habitation areas, and other features of past human activity.

Investigating archaeological resources requires the use of a specialized set of techniques and methods for extracting the maximum information from the ground. Archaeological resources can be either prehistoric or historic in origin.

- **Additional definitions**

Impact: Any change, whether good or bad, in the quality of a cultural resource's significant historic, architectural, or archaeological characteristics.

Adverse impact: A damaging change to the quality of the cultural resource's significant characteristics. An adverse impact will result in the loss of important information.

Significant property: A cultural resource which meets the standards of the State or National Register of Historic Places.

Impact mitigation: A course of action which lessens the harm that will be inflicted upon a cultural resource. It may include work restrictions, repair, restoration, documentation, the installation of a protective covering, or the planned removal of a resource. In the case of archaeological sites, the latter typically involves full-scale excavations.

Archaeology: A set of methods and techniques designed to recover important information about

the life-ways of past peoples and cultures from the remains they left in the ground.

SHPO: State Historic Preservation Officer, who is an appointed official responsible for administering the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) within a state government or jurisdiction.

- **Why protecting cultural resources is important.**

1. Cultural resource provide information about the past that no other sources can.
2. Cultural resources are non-renewable resources. Once they have been destroyed, they are gone forever, and nothing can replace them.
3. Protection emphasizing preservation of cultural resources is required by law.

- **Why planners should be concerned with cultural resources.**

By properly considering cultural resources, planners can make a substantial contribution to our knowledge base about peoples and cultures of the past.

Preserving cultural resources is one way to preserve open space/farmland.

Identifying and caring for cultural resources helps foster pride in a community's prehistoric, historic, and cultural assets.

Emphasizing the study preservation, and reconstruction of historic cultural resources can contribute to the renewed use of local areas.

The conservation and interpretation of cultural resources can assist in the promotion of tourism within a given community (e.g. city of Eagle Historic District).

- **Five steps in Considering Cultural**

Resources in Planning

1. Be aware of the kinds of activities that might harm or destroy cultural resources.
2. Identify cultural resources.
3. Avoid adverse impact to cultural resources.
4. Determine significance if avoidance is not feasible.
5. Develop mitigation measures.